RE: Project Based Learning at YCSC

YCSC Staff

Background:

YCSC has always been and will always be a social justice centered, project-based school. The Authentic Performance Tasks (APTs) and Community Action Projects (CAPs), as qualitative assessments designed by teachers with students in a reciprocal leadership dialogue about social transformation, are still the best ways for teachers and staff to allow for young people to propose new social, political, and economic realities in the process of earning school credit. The entire project-based approach is our most appropriate and culturally responsive method to engage young people as they showcase their extensive funds of knowledge.

With the above in mind, YCSC added some supplemental assessment layers in the Summer of 2016 to the project-based assessment model which is still YCSC’s signature approach to assessing/showcasing student learning. The 2 new assessment layers that were incorporated in the 2016/17 school-year were Accuplacer & Study Island. In addition, Schoology was added as the new learning management system (LMS) to host the project-based assessments but is not an assessment tool.

Over the years, YCSC leadership and its YB program partners were continually being asked from a variety of stakeholders for a way to show student growth via some quantitative assessment that would provide an objective metric to go along with the qualitative project-based assessments (APTs & CAPs) that could not produce hard numbers.

The reason for opting for growth as opposed to mastery or proficiency is because we know that educational research, coupled with YouthBuild's extensive experience in working with young people highlights the need to factor and educationally accommodate for all social realities. Thus, a growth model of assessment, where gains are monitored during a specified
period of time, is the most culturally responsive form of assessing students.

Implementation of New Tools:

Eventually, the decision made by a set of 3 teacher committees and administration was to utilize the following vendors:

1) Schoology: To host the STEM, Humanities, and Culture layers of YCSC’s project-based and qualitative approach to assessment.

2) Accuplacer: To provide a Pre and Post assessment of students as an objective method to track student growth, while students are at YCSC/YB.

3) Study Island: To provide practice and familiarity with multiple choice testing so as to better prepare students for their PSE goals that are often linked to multiple choice tests and not projects.

Timeline for 2016/17:

Trimester 1: During Trimester 1, the main goals were to train and introduce all staff to Study Island, Accuplacer, and Schoology and to overcome all technical difficulties network-wide. Thanks to the leadership of Dr. Sonia Hernandez, this has been accomplished.

Trimester 2: We are now expecting all staff to get more and familiar with all 3 tools to minimize and remove all barriers to implementation.

Trimester 3: In Trimester 3, the expectation is that all staff at all sites are using Schoology, Accuplacer, and Study Island routinely with full implementation.

Summer 2017: YCSC leadership will prepare all reports and data in order to present at the Summer 2017 professional development in late July.

Support from YCSC HQ

We are committed to providing you all of the support you need to make this happen but we also need your commitment to utilizing all of these tools to help our young people be better prepared for their next step in life.
Conclusion

Again, YCSC still believes that the project-based approach is the most appropriate and culturally responsive method to engage young people as they showcase their extensive funds of knowledge, yet we do need your help in incorporating these supplemental tools to best support young people with their post-secondary pathway of their choice.

Thank you,

Dr. Rudy Cuevas, Principal